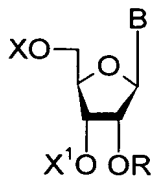


**Amendments to the Specification:**

At page 2, please replace the paragraph beginning on line 14 with the following amended paragraph:

According to the present invention, there is provided a process for the preparation of a compound of formula (1):



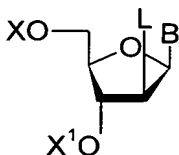
wherein:

X, and X'<sup>1</sup> are each independently H or a protecting group;

B is a base; and

R is an alkyl, alkoxyalkyl, alkenyl, or alkynyl group, each of which may be optionally substituted;

which comprises reacting a compound of formula (2):



wherein

L is a leaving group; and

B, X and X'<sup>1</sup> are as defined above

with a compound of formula Al(OR)<sub>3</sub> wherein R is as defined above, under substantially anhydrous conditions.

At page 3, please replace the paragraph beginning on line 4 with the following amended paragraph:

Examples of protecting groups which can be represented by X and X'<sup>1</sup> include acid labile protecting groups, particularly trityl and substituted trityl groups such as dimethoxytrityl and 9-phenylxanthen-9-yl groups; acid-labile acetal protecting groups, particularly 1-(2-fluorophenyl)-4-methoxypiperidine-4-yl (Fmp); and base labile-protecting groups such as acyl groups, commonly comprising up to 16 carbon atoms, such as ethanoyl

B<sup>2</sup>  
concl  
groups or fatty alkanoyl groups, including particularly linear or branched C<sub>6-16</sub> alkanoyl groups, such as lauroyl groups; benzoyl and substituted benzoyl groups, such as alkyl, commonly C<sub>1-4</sub> alkyl-, and halo, commonly chloro or fluoro, substituted benzoyl groups.--

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✓  
At page 3, please replace the paragraph beginning on line 28 with the following amended paragraph:

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B<sup>3</sup>  
In addition to the presence of protecting groups X and ~~X~~<sup>2</sup> X<sup>1</sup>, bases employed in present invention may also be protected where necessary by suitable protecting groups. Protecting groups employed are those known in the art for protecting such bases. For example, A and/or C can be protected by benzoyl, including substituted benzoyl, for example alkyl- or alkoxy-, often C<sub>1-4</sub> alkyl- or C<sub>1-4</sub>alkoxy-, benzoyl; pivaloyl; and amidine, particularly dialkylaminomethylene, preferably di(C<sub>1-4</sub>-alkyl) aminomethylene such as dimethyl or dibutyl aminomethylene. G may be protected by a phenyl group, including substituted phenyl, for example 2,5-dichlorophenyl and also by an isobutyryl group. T and U generally are not protected, but in certain embodiments they may advantageously be protected, for example at O4 by a phenyl group, including substituted phenyl, for example 2,4-dimethylphenyl or at N3 by a pivaloyloxymethyl, benzoyl, alkyl or alkoxy substituted benzoyl, such as C<sub>1-4</sub> alkyl- or C<sub>1-4</sub> alkoxybenzoyl.

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✓  
At page 4, please replace the paragraph beginning on line 1 with the following amended paragraph:

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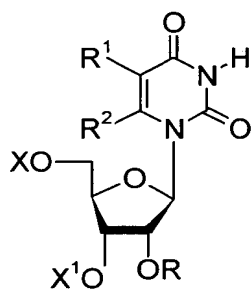
B<sup>4</sup>  
In certain embodiments, X and ~~X~~<sup>2</sup> X<sup>1</sup> comprise a single protecting group which protects both the 3' and 5' positions. Examples of such groups include disiloxanes, especially tetraalkyldisiloxanes, such as tetraisopropyldisiloxane.

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At page 4, please replace the paragraph beginning on line 12 with the following amended paragraph:

Accordingly, a second aspect of the present invention provides a process for the preparation of a compound of formula (3):



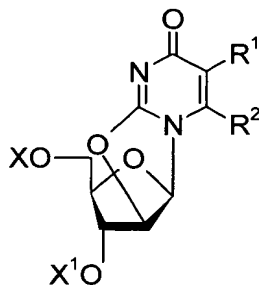
wherein:

X and ~~X'~~ X<sup>1</sup> are as defined above;

R<sup>1</sup> and R<sup>2</sup> are each independently H, alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, or halogen; and

R is an alkyl, alkoxyalkyl, alkenyl, or alkynyl group, each of which may be optionally substituted;

which comprises the reaction of a compound of formula (4)



wherein

X, ~~X'~~ X<sup>1</sup>, R<sup>1</sup> and R<sup>2</sup> are as defined above;

with a compound of formula Al(OR)<sub>3</sub> wherein R is as defined above, under substantially anhydrous conditions.